

REMARKS

By the present amendment, Claims 1 and 8-12 have been amended, Claims 6 and 7 have been cancelled, and Claims 13-22 have been newly added. Claims 1 and 8-22 remain pending in the present application. Claims 1 and 13 are independent claims.

Claims 9-12 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. In particular, there is insufficient antecedent basis for the recitation in Claim 9 of "the fastening strips", and the recitation in Claims 10-12 of "the fastening means". Applicant has obviated this rejection by amending Claim 9 to depend from Claim 8, and by amending Claims 10-12 to depend from Claim 9.

Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection of Claims 9-12 under 35, U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph.

Claim 1 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by Sheehy (U.S. Patent No. 2,516,264). Claim 5 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Sheehy. Claims 2, 3, and 9-12 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Sheehy. Claim 4 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Sheehy in view of Hiroshi (Japan Patent Application Publication No. JP 11-9171) and Pueyo et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,986,551). Applicant notes with appreciation the indication by the Examiner that Claims 6-8 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

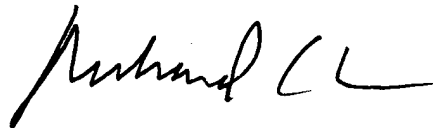
In this regard, Applicant has amended independent Claim 1 to incorporate the allowable subject matter of Claim 6. Newly added independent Claim 13 corresponds to original Claim 8 rewritten in independent form. Newly added dependent Claims 14-22

correspond respectively to original dependent Claims 2-6 and amended depended Claims 9-12. Applicant respectfully submits that the amendments to the claims overcome the rejections, are fully supported by the original disclosure, and introduce no new matter therewith.

Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of Claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Sheehy, the rejection of Claim 5 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Sheehy, the rejection of Claims 2, 3, and 9-12 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sheehy, and the rejection of Claim 4 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sheehy in view of Hiroshi and Pueyo et al.

For the foregoing reasons, Applicant respectfully submits that the present application is in condition for allowance. If such is not the case, the Examiner is requested to kindly contact the undersigned in an effort to satisfactorily conclude the prosecution of this application.

Respectfully submitted,



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